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ABSTRACT

A critical ethnographic study followed six preservice teachers throughout their teacher education program at a medium sized state university in West Virginia. This segment of the study situates their student teaching experience within a broader social context and addresses the ways, as well as the extent to which, the student teachers' experiences either strengthen or challenge prevailing power relations in Appalachia. The student teachers, three male and three female, four elementary and two secondary education majors, were white, native to the Appalachian area, and from relatively poor and undereducated families. The study gathered data from observation of the student teachers and through interviews with them, and with teachers, the university student teaching seminar instructors, and the school-based student teaching supervisors. Analysis of the findings led to the conclusions that these teachers were unlikely to challenge the current social system in which they themselves had achieved some moderate success. The results also suggested that the subjects' student teaching experiences did little to increase their awareness or understanding of social inequalities or of the school's role in maintaining or changing those inequalities. Though the college's official documents stressed the importance of critical reasoning, most formal and informal programmatic messages were the antithesis of critical reasoning--comments made by the student teachers at the end of their program remained fairly superficial and did not seem informed by much reading and thinking about educational issues. Overall the teacher education program focused on the mechanics of teaching; the student teaching experiences, and to a large extent the entire teacher education program, failed to offer a challenge to these prospective teachers' previous understandings of social inequalities. The teacher education program did not encourage the student teachers to play an active role in social reform efforts nor was it oriented to encourage such a response in the student teachers. (Contains 21 references.) (JB)

Student Teaching as Social Reproduction:

An Appalachian Ethnography

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Student Teaching as Social Reproduction:

An Appalachian Ethnography

A great deal has been written about the potentially reproductive and/or transformative power of teachers. In addition to purely theoretical discussions linking what happens in schools to the broader social context (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), the literature includes numerous empirical studies relating everyday classroom or school practices and experiences to broader social structures. For the most part this literature focuses on social inequalities and the role of the school in either challenging or perpetuating those. For example, Spatig (1988) and Weiler (1988) have examined connections between school experiences and unequal power relations between males and females. In general this literature lends force to, or substantiates, the intuitive belief that what teachers do (and don't do) in their roles as mentors, caretakers, socializers, and transmitters of information is related to the ideas and actions of their students, and through them, to the nature of our society. In addition to their own potential for responding to social inequalities, teachers have the potential for influencing the nature of their students' responses.

This chapter considers these issues in relation to the experiences of six student teachers in an Appalachian setting in the United States. Understanding the relationship between these student teaching experiences and the reproduction or transformation of social inequalities requires an examination of power relations

in Appalachia generally. Appalachia is a region which stretches along a mountain range from western New York to northern Georgia, including parts of twelve states (New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama) and all of the state of West Virginia. It is an area of extreme poverty juxtaposed with rich natural resources where inequalities between the poor and the relatively small number of people who benefit from the wealth of natural resources are blatant. Based on his study of a central Appalachian town, Gaventa (1982) has argued that in situations characterized by intense economic and political inequalities the response of those who are deprived can only be understood in terms of historical and current power relations in the local context.

In a sense, his study is an empirical exploration of the three dimensions of power posited by Lukes (1974). Gaventa explains the first dimension of power as the ability of one individual or group (A) to control the actions of another individual or group (B) and the second dimension of power as the ability of A to limit B's access to decision-making opportunities and mechanisms themselves. The third dimension of power, involving A's ideological control of or influence over B, is described as a particularly effective and treacherous dimension of power in that it controls those in powerless positions by influencing or determining their thoughts and feelings. Through this dimension, A is able to control B's ideas about and understandings of the inequalities themselves.

This interpretation resembles Friere's (1972) idea that people

who are oppressed internalize dominant social values and beliefs (even those which are oppressive to them) as a means of escaping the **feeling**, though not the actual circumstance, of powerlessness. Friere has suggested that this internalization process is more likely to occur in situations where inequalities are marked and where the powerless are highly dependent on the powerful. In such situations oppressed individuals and groups are excluded from participation in democratic experiences which, according to Friere, is the basis for critical consciousness.

Gaventa (1982) describes the central Appalachian community which is the focus of his study as characterized by particularly glaring inequalities, in the context of the United States nationally. Whereas schooling or teacher education is not a focus of Gaventa's study, he suggests that "socialization institutions -- particularly education and religion" (p. x) have an impact on power relationships in Appalachia, particularly in terms of the third dimension of power.

The Study

The data I have collected about student teachers' experiences in a similar Appalachian community provide the basis for examining such power relations in greater depth. Like Gaventa's findings, those presented here demonstrate the extent to which dominant interests exercise power materially as well as purvey a view of the world that shapes the thinking and actions not only of the powerful within the community, but also of the oppressed. The student teaching data were collected as part of a longitudinal critical

ethnography concerning the process of becoming a teacher in Appalachia. The approach implied by the term "critical ethnography" focuses on the economic and political inequalities that characterize social relations in the world today. This critical approach examines the way that everyday life activities may strengthen or diminish these inequalities.

The critical ethnography focuses on the experiences and ideas of six teacher education students (four elementary education majors, two secondary majors) in a medium sized state university in West Virginia. I first met these individuals in 1989 when they were enrolled in an introductory teacher education class. As a participant observer, I went through the introductory course with them and then followed them, through observations and yearly individual interviews, during the remainder of their teacher education program. I observed and interviewed them during their student teaching experiences. This included sitting in on university-based student teaching seminars, visiting in local schools where they were placed for student teaching, talking with them (in formal as well as informal interviews) during and at the conclusion of their student teaching semester, and talking (formally and informally) with the university student teaching seminar instructor and school-based student teaching supervisors.

In this chapter, I describe the student teaching experience as it was lived day to day by people who were directly involved in it. Also, I situate these student teaching experiences in a broader social context, addressing ways in which, as well as the extent to

which, these student teaching experiences strengthen or challenge prevailing relations of power in Appalachia. Before discussing these student teaching experiences, I provide information about the national context with special attention to the role of teachers in the United States both currently and historically. In addition, I introduce the six student teachers and the region in which they have grown up and continue to live. Following a detailed description of their student teaching experiences, I discuss them as expressions of the power inequities and social reproduction processes discussed above.

THE UNITED STATES AS CONTEXT

The United States, while remaining one of the more affluent countries in the world, is currently struggling with economic problems. Concurrently, teaching, which was once considered a solid middle class occupation -- often a vehicle of upward mobility for working class women and minorities -- is experiencing an economic decline. This change, which is part of a shift in the occupational structure in the United States generally, is relevant to understanding the political position of teachers in the United States at the time of this study.

Certified teachers, not unlike those in other occupations, are finding it difficult to find and maintain employment in their field because there are substantially more trained teachers than there are teaching positions available for them. As is discussed more extensively in the following section, this is particularly

problematic in poor and highly rural areas like those in West Virginia. Those who do find employment as teachers find themselves with relatively low wages and little leverage to use in bargaining for increases.

Historically, teachers in the US, who were not professionalized in the sense of having any standard training, were hired locally and served local interests. In fairly large urban areas, for example, neighborhood schools (often attended primarily by one ethnic group) were staffed by teachers who were, for the most part, members of the same ethnic group. Beginning with Horace Mann and the Common School movement, the teacher's role has become increasingly defined centrally and standardized, particularly in terms of the type of education required for certification. It has been argued that this centralization served to professionalize teachers and to increase their autonomy vis-a-vis lay members of the local community (Kaestle, 1983).

While the centralization of teaching may have served to assist teachers in their striving for greater autonomy and power, the ~~recent focus~~ increasing emphasis on teacher competence and accountability has served to undercut their occupational autonomy. It has been argued that recent reform movements with their emphases on prescriptions related to the methods and mechanics of teaching are a form of occupational deskilling (Ginsburg, 1988; Spring, 1990) which actually proletarianizes teachers, leaving them with even less autonomy, power and status than ever.

In this section, I integrate together ~~into a whole~~ information about these six individuals and their families with information about the BB program and the group generally.

THE STUDENT TEACHERS IN APPALACHIA

The six student teachers I studied are white; three are women, three are men. For the most part, they grew up in lower middle class families in small towns and rural communities near the university. Several of them described their earlier school years in terms of traveling long distances on buses to attend consolidated schools. In some cases, they are first generation college students. Two thirds of their fathers, and about one third of their mothers, have college degrees. In four families, one or both parents have, or used to have, education-related jobs. For example, Celia, who grew up in a small nearby town of about 2,000, has a father who is a high school art teacher and a mother who is a secretary.

My Mom, She Raised Us

In individual interviews, in addition to talking about their parents' occupations, the student teachers talked about roles and relationships within their families of origin. They described their lives and their families in terms of the strength, courage and hard work it takes to survive during difficult times. Mothers and grandmothers often were described as strong family caretakers, both financially and emotionally; and many fathers and grandfathers were described as struggling economically, as emotionally and sometimes physically abs and, in many cases, as alcoholic (Spatig, 1991).

For example, Nina described her father as an unhappy man who drank too much and hated his job with the Ohio River Company. He

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had given up a teaching job so that he could earn more money. A returning student with college-aged children of her own, Nina described how her family did not have enough money to send her to college when she was younger:

> I remember 'cause Mom did take me to the bank...and Dad would have had to take out a personal loan and Dad just wouldn't do it. And that's the only thing I ever held against my dad. Because I was the only one in the family that had the grades and had the ambition to go to college and I wanted to go....I think he just thought I was a girl and I would just get married and that it would just be a waste.

Similar stories of family difficulties were told by male students. Nate, for example, talked about family problems during his high school years.

> When I went through high school, I kind of didn't go -- didn't apply myself...almost failed tenth grade. We had some hard times as a family -- were on welfare -- just poverty sort of, so it carried over to school. My mom and dad, they split up. And he was an alcoholic...I was growing up around it so, you know, [I thought:] "He's a drunk and he let us all down." Now I just forgive him. It's like a sickness. He couldn't help it. My mom, she raised us. When they split up, I was like four...She raised four sons. She worked for Avon. She's done pretty well for us, working and everything.

In an effort to use these six individuals as cultural

informants, I asked each of them to talk with me about their perceptions of Appalachia which they described as family oriented, religious, proud and poor. These four themes overlap as they weave through the student teachers' descriptions of Appalachia and their own life experiences within it. For example, Celia talked about how much she admired her grandmother who was a first grade teacher.

> I am real, real close to her. She's a really strong person. She's really a good Christian; that's where all my church influence came from. She's just really strong. She took care of my grandpa during his illness for a long time.

Along the same lines, Nina described the strength with which her grandmother faced difficult life circumstances.

> The person I'd most like to be like is my other grandma because like my papaw left her when she was real young and she had like eight kids and she raised them by herself; and I mean she was so impressive...She raised eight kids by herself and she worked and she cleaned houses.

Nina's mother, who worked on the production line of an industrial plant, faced similar hardships.

> She put up with my dad. He walked out on her after thirty-two years. My dad was a drunk. It wasn't a good marriage but mom was one of those [who says:] "I've got five kids. I'll tough it out." Mom did what she had to do. I can remember she worked five days a week and came

> home and cooked. And then on week-ends all she did was clean house and do the clothes.

The student teachers did not mince words when discussing the hardships and problems characteristic of Appalachia. Stephen described the people of Appalachia in this way:

> I would say that for the most part they're conservative, God-fearing people. [There is] low income, a lot of unemployment; drugs is on the increase; [there is a] high...[rate] of teenage pregnancies. The state's in shambles, as far as the West Virginia part of Appalachia.

While James was similarly straightforward in describing economic conditions in the area, he expressed pride in relation to what he saw as the region's more positive features.

> It's not an area most people would like to be, unless you've grown up here all your life. But you go anywhere else ... and you won't find friendlier people, people that are willing to help each other. And we have four seasons. But it's an [de]pressed area right now and I don't see it getting any better. ... My economics teacher last year put it best. He said we are a third world state. We ought to quit looking at ourselves as first world and start looking at ourselves as third world. ... One hundred thousand people have left [the state] in the last ten years and it will be that or more in the next ten years.

Other student teachers were equally forthright in discussing the

adverse economic circumstances in Appalachia and they also were equally quick to express pride in Appalachia and a sensitivity about the way in which the region is often stereotyped. For example, when Celia talked with me about Appalachia, she began by saying:

> First, it really, really makes me mad. People go around and think we don't wear any shoes. And I even have a textbook that has an awful picture in it of a family in Charleston; and I tell you the truth, I've never seen any person in Charleston that looked like that. I don't think we're like that. I think we're diversified; I think every area is.

Data from other sources suggest that the experiences of these young people and their perceptions of Appalachian poverty are not atypical. As reported by the West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs (Fleishaman, 1994), the current unemployment rate in West Virginia is 11.6%, the highest in the nation, and almost double the national average of 6.7%. The same report indicated that unemployment is substantially higher in the more rural counties of the state. For example, Wyoming County's unemployment rate was listed at 20% and eleven other counties have rates between 16 and 20%. Another indication of the state's economic difficulties is the percentage of people receiving public assistance. As of 1991, the state average of individuals receiving public assistance such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and non-public assistance food stamps was 19.4%. This can be compared with a 1988 national average of 12.4% receiving public assistance.

It is likely that the level of economic depression in Appalachia is related to the rural character of most of the communities in the region. In West Virginia, which lies totally within Appalachia, two thirds of the population reside in rural areas where unemployment is higher and per capita income is lower even than the state average. The tendency for poverty to be exacerbated in rural regions holds true nationally and internationally as well. O'Hare (1988), for example, reports that in 1986 whereas 62% of rural poor adults in the United States worked at least part-time, their earnings were so low that the individuals remained below the poverty line. Shapiro (1989) argues that a rural family with working parents is about twice as likely as an urban counterpart to be poor. Furthermore, the rural poor are more likely than the urban poor to hold jobs, but their wage levels keep them in poverty. According to O'Hare (1988), the poverty rate in rural America is increasing at a high rate. Not surprisingly, studies show that people living in rural areas are likely to experience the ill effects of other conditions associated with poverty, such as malnutrition, substandard housing, poor health and high rates of disabilities (Lazere, Leonard & Kravitz, 1989; Shotland, 1988).

Despite these grim statistics, it could be argued that rural Appalachia is not poor because it has tremendous wealth in the form of natural resources, particularly coal. However, most of the people of Appalachia **are** poor; for the most part they do not own or benefit from the region's wealth of natural resources. These are

enjoyed primarily by ~~large, absentee land owners.~~ This is described beautifully by Gaventa (1982) who calls central Appalachia a "region of poverty amidst riches; a place of glaring inequalities."

According to Reid (1990), the major limitation to rural economic growth is the lack of demand for highly educated workers, not a shortage of workers. Economic growth in rural communities often means new minimum wage jobs which offer limited benefits to the poor. Amount of education cannot fully explain the persistent differences in rural and urban poverty rates. Reid (1990) and Shapiro (1989) report that differences in rural and urban high school graduation rates have narrowed over the past decade, while the poverty gap has widened. In fact, the greatest discrepancy in poverty rates is among those with more education. This discrepancy gives those with more education an incentive to leave rural areas.

These findings are consistent with the experiences of the student teachers I studied. In their earlier years in the teacher training program, they expressed a strong desire to remain in the area in the future, but they also indicated an awareness of the difficulties associated with this choice. In Lisa's words, "I just don't want to move away from West Virginia; but I don't want to be poor the rest of my life either". As the student teachers involved in this study completed their programs and graduated they began to look for teaching jobs. Currently, only one has secured a full-time teaching position; she is a Headstart teacher, working in a rural area in Ohio, earning $5.75 an hour. The other five are

working as substitute teachers.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the student teaching experiences of these six young people who have grown up in Appalachia, a place they love despite the hardships they have experienced. I begin with a brief description of the teacher education program of which student teaching was one part.

THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The student teachers were enrolled in the College of Education during an interesting time, programmatically. In 1989, the college began preparing for its National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) evaluation by engaging in a self-study which increasingly became focused on determining a conceptual theme or framework for the teacher preparation program overall. In May, 1990, the college faculty voted to endorse **critical reasoning** as the organizing theme of the knowledge base in the program.

A booklet distributed to college faculty in December, 1990 defined critical reasoning in the following way:

> Critical reasoning is the active process of inquiring, identifying, refining, and judging divergent patterns and perspectives. Critical reasoning encourages students to develop their own value positions on the basis of critical study and their own reflections.

The booklet also included four readings which represent a range of

ideas about critical reasoning. Two articles address critical reasoning in relation to social context, with a focus on power relations. For example, John Smythe (1989) argues that a reflective stance involves recognition of the historical, theoretical and moral nature of teaching and advocates a more activist notion of reflection; reflection which is not limited to passive deliberation and contemplation. Other readings were selected from the literature on cognition and information-processing. For example, the booklet included an article by Richard Paul (1986) which contrasts didactic and critical teaching by listing 21 differences between the two approaches.

Subsequent writing on the knowledge base was less inclusive of this range. The conceptual framework ultimately was described in a way that is somewhere between the critical pedagogy literature and the literature in cognitive psychology. This is evidenced by the statement on critical reasoning that was placed in the College of Education Student Handbook when it was revised in the Spring of 1992. The handbook opens with the following straightforward statement about the importance of critical reasoning in the college.

> As College of Education faculty, we believe that our primary goal is to cultivate the **critical reasoning** capacities of prospective and practicing educators. Because this is the central focus of all our programs, we want to introduce it to you at the outset.

The handbook goes on to list and briefly discuss five themes which

characterize critical reasoning. The themes, which are a means of explaining the idea of critical reasoning to incoming students, address the importance of: (1) examining a variety of perspectives on any issue, (2) cultivating independence in thought and action, (3) inquiry, both in terms of developing an inquiring attitude and in terms of learning how to use a variety of inquiry and research methods, (4) making reasoned value judgments in light of alternatives, and (5) relating theory to practice in deliberate ways. The handbook statement concerning critical reasoning concludes by saying:

> In sum, our goal is for you to become critical thinkers so that you, in turn, will become educators who will be able to work with students in such a way that they will learn to think well, that is, to think both carefully and critically.

The brief description above is intended to give the reader a sense of one aspect of the formal programmatic context at the time these students were engaged in student teaching. While the college had officially adopted a critical reasoning conceptual framework, the student teaching experiences of these students, described below, did not seem to be characterized by a focus on critical reasoning.

Based on an inductive content analysis of observation and interview data obtained during and immediately following the student teaching semester, several issues are salient. One is related to a practical, pragmatic, "whatever works" orientation to

teaching which was evident in the content of university seminar discussions, in the classroom practices of the student teachers and in their reactions to the student teaching experience overall. A second issue concerns a focus on appearances as opposed to substance, which was evident, for example, in an emphasis ~~on dress~~ and on the appearance, rather than the content, of bulletin boards and learning centers. A third issue relates to the fragmentation characteristic of thinking about teaching. Lesson plans, bulletin boards, handouts, speakers, and behavior management techniques were dealt with as isolated ideas, materials or skills related to teaching. Finally, there was an overarching concern with classroom discipline and control. The way this issue was addressed intersects with the other themes in that classroom management was discussed: (a) in isolation from other aspects of teaching, (b) in relation to what specific techniques work and (c) with respect to what makes the teacher and her/his class appear orderly.

The remainder of the chapter elaborates these themes in relation to the developing teaching identities of the student teachers. Also, the themes are discussed as inconsistent with, and even contradictory to, the critical reasoning model of teacher education which was formally adopted by the student teachers' university program. Finally, themes are discussed in relation to inequalities in broader social power relations, with particular attention to potential political roles and activities of these prospective teachers.

STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCES

The Dark Side of Teaching: Classroom Discipline and Control

As I coded the student teaching data of the most notable issue, in terms of both frequency and degree of emphasis, was related to classroom discipline and control. One student teacher referred to this as "the dark side of teaching" which he believed university professors tend to avoid. Whereas this student teacher felt inadequately prepared (by his university program) in the area of discipline, my data from the student teaching semester show preponderant attention to issues related to discipline. I think it is fair to say that discipline was considered the most important issue addressed in student teaching. The university student teaching supervisor told me, "We hit discipline very early; it's extremely important." She went on to explain how she tells student teachers "that there is no learning that can happen in a classroom if everybody is going every which way and yelling and even running around the room."

She was particularly concerned that student teachers maintain order because she believes they should be trying to impress both her (as the student teaching supervisor) and local school personnel with their ability to control a classroom. She expressed concern about what people would think if they walked by a student teacher's classroom that was noisy and (by definition) out of control.

Given the programmatic context, in terms of the College's

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focus on and commitment to critical reasoning, I was surprised about **how** classroom discipline was approached. As the above examples suggest, discipline tended to be thought of in terms of quiet and control. Quietness seemed to be the hallmark of a well disciplined class. One student teacher described her classroom teacher as an "excellent disciplinarian. I mean, the kids in her class...know exactly when to be quiet." Also, fieldnotes of classroom observations contain countless examples of student teachers trying to make sure their students are quiet.

> We need to quietly get our readers out. ...
>
> There doesn't need to be any talking. ...
>
> Break is over now. You need to be quiet. ...
>
> When everyone is quiet, I have an activity. ...
>
> When everyone is seated and quiet, I'll give you directions.

These kinds of comments also were directed to the student teachers themselves by the university supervisor during the weekly student teaching seminar. "Tina has a question. Let's all be quiet while she asks it. ... You keep talking and we'll stay longer."

In an interview, one student teacher talked with me very explicitly about the importance of students being quiet. He was criticizing a teacher in the field for being too lax in disciplining her students. He described her as being more comfortable than he was with students interacting. In explaining his own views, he said, "I'm more like - I'll give [students] time to talk or I'll give [them] certain activities where [they] can

interact, but mostly if I'm teaching, [they] need to be quiet."

Overlapping with the issue of quiet are the issues of control and compliance. A teacher-controlled classroom with obedient, compliant students was equated with good discipline. The fact that teachers should control their classes was taken for granted by the student teachers. Their only question was about **how** they could gain and maintain the control. One student teacher described a supervising teacher's classroom in this way: "The kids were running wild. ... He didn't have control. ... His attitude was like - wasn't a very good teaching attitude."

This desire for control also was evident in observations of student teachers interacting with students in the field as well as in discussions with them about the observations. Most examples involve a student teacher exacting compliance from students by threatening or administering punishment of some kind. The following excerpts from classroom fieldnotes provide examples:

> Jason, sit down. Justin, quit it. Just sit. Put it on the floor. The next person I call down will not go to the computer room next week at all.
>
> [...]
>
> At one point [a student teacher] told a boy to move from his seat to a table in the back of the room. The boy didn't move. He just sat there looking down. The room got quiet as students anticipated the student teacher's response. He said, "You need to come back here so you'll learn more." The boy said "no", still looking

> down. The student teacher said, "It's your choice. Move or get detention." The boy silently got up and moved to the back table.

Overlapping with the focus on insuring that students are quiet and obedient, there was a tendency to think about discipline in terms of specific behavior modification strategies that are effective in ensuring quiet and control. For example, every elementary student teacher was required to design or choose one to use with their students during student teaching. As I was interviewing the university supervisor, she gave me an example of a "good" one. It consisted of a cord with paper ducks (each of which has a child's name on it) draped across the wall.

> [I]f the child chooses to disobey the rule...then their duck goes upside down. Next time [the child disobeys] the duck comes off. If the duck comes off, the child gets detention.

Show and Tell: Appearance Versus Substance

The second theme concerns a focus on form and appearance over substance. I titled this theme "Show and Tell" because one of the requirements of the university's elementary student teaching seminar was that each student teacher bring two "show and tells" to share with fellow seminar students. In most cases, "show and tells" were little tidbits of information, helpful hints, ideas -- things with little substance which could be communicated to classmates relatively quickly. As examples, the university supervisor brought

several "show and tells" to the seminar. One was a one-page handout called "The Teacher's Prayer", which begins "God grant me wisdom, creativity and love". She distributed it to the student teachers, read it aloud and commented on how beautiful it was. There was no further discussion of it. Another of her "show and tells", which was shared around St. Patrick's Day, consisted of a sheet of lined green paper with a leprechaun in one corner and shamrocks around the edges. These were simply passed out as she commented about how cute they were.

Another example of the greater emphasis on form than content is related to the supervisor's use of videotaping in the seminar. She videotaped each student teacher in her or his public school classrooms. In the seminar sessions, the videotapes were shown without the sound so that we got only a **picture** of the classroom. As the video panned around the classroom, the supervisor pointed out what she considered positive features; these frequently focused on the physical appearance of the classroom. For example, in one video, she drew our attention to a "gorgeous bulletin board". Then she pointed out that the learning center table had red paper on it, commenting, "Isn't that pretty?...Where did you get your big cardboard to make that?"

Another videotape showed a classroom with chairs arranged like seats on an airplane, as part of a unit on transportation. The supervisor commented, "Isn't that darling? They even had flight attendants. ... This is what I call creative, sparkly teaching."

In addition to "show and tells" and videotapes, another

example of this emphasis on form over content relates to the way lesson plans and curricular units were treated. For example, in discussing requirements for the student teaching seminar the university supervisor explained to me that she instructs the student teachers about:

> how to do the lesson plan and how to set up a unit. ... They crank out a hundred million of them [lesson plan sheets], punch holes and put them in a notebook. And they know it's like the American Express Card; they should never leave home without it. If they do, I have a cow, because I go in and the first thing I ask is to see their log, and they better be caught up. If not, then I make a notation of that and discuss that with them. They have to keep their daily lesson plans on a special log sheet and they write a lesson plan for each day, for each subject, so that after the time it's over...[it should be] about an inch thick.

In relation to curriculum, what was discussed frequently and emphasized was that daily lesson plans be done using a particular format, that they be done on time and that a certain number be done. I heard little discussion concerning the substance or content of the plans -- let alone critical analyses of these.

Doing Whatever Works

The third theme is a "whatever works" orientation to teaching that is related to the idea of learning through experience. In

control issues: the class was too hard to keep on task and under control as a whole group.

Another student teacher, in critiquing his university professors, spoke about how important it was for them to have recent classroom experience in order to know and teach about what works:

> Well, I guess they [professors] have to be in the classroom. They have to know what's going on. They have to know what works for the majority of classrooms and I guess they have to know the new learning styles that are going to work. ... They just can't sit on their soap box and preach to you what's going to work.

The same student teacher went on to explain that ultimately each individual teacher must try something to see if it works for her or him. His advice for student teachers and new teachers was to:

> try it. If it works, use it. If it didn't work, you know, try something else. You know, you could try most of their [professors'] opinions in the classroom and see how they work for you.

The university supervisor also seemed to adhere to a "whatever works" philosophy of teaching. In a seminar discussion about a classroom discipline strategy in which the children wear hats, the supervisor described it as a "neat little behavior modification thing. If you misbehave, you lose your hat. If it works, use it." Another example of this theme is the university supervisor's comments when I asked her about the extent to which she was able to

discussing their teacher education experiences, student teachers expressed the view that most of what they learned about teaching had come from life outside the College of Education. It is similar to what Britzman (1991) talks about as the myth that experience makes the teacher.

One student teacher told me that his teacher education program had provided him with no major insights or understandings about teaching. He tried to be polite but said he [illegible] that, "Life has been my best teacher." What the student teachers repeatedly said they learned from life, from being in the real world of the public schools, was **what worked**. In terms of discipline, for example, one student teacher discussed positive reinforcement techniques she studied at the University and then tried in her second grade student teaching placement.

> It works great...in second grade. Second graders are much easier to discipline than first graders. ... But, you know, not just giving them things. Just saying "I like the way you're ready. ... Thank you for being ready for me to go on. ... They really respond to this a lot.

Another student teacher told me that she learned in her teacher education program that ability grouping should not be used in teaching reading. She didn't remember the reasons given for not using ability grouping. She went on to say that she agreed with this until she went out there (in the real world) and saw that teaching the class as a whole group "didn't work". When I asked in what sense it didn't work, she responded focusing on discipline and

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integrate critical reasoning into her student teaching seminars. She said that using critical reasoning "didn't work too well" because student teachers are required to follow the public school curriculum guides which in many cases are not oriented to critical reasoning.

Whereas there was much attention given to nostrums for what works, there was a noticeable lack of critical analysis of what works. I heard little discussion concerning what works for whom, under what circumstances, for what purposes, and so on.

STUDENTS' PREVIOUSLY HELD IDEAS

The sections above describe six Appalachian young people, from lower middle class families, located in a very poor region within a relatively affluent nation. At the time of this study, they were involved in student teaching, the final stage of an undergraduate teacher education program which was officially organized around the theme of critical reasoning.

It is also important to look closely at what these student teachers brought to the program, in terms of their own previously held ideas about teaching. These ideas are related to the nature of their responses to program messages, both the critical reasoning messages and the messages stressing the mechanics and methods of teaching.

Interview data from earlier in the teacher education experiences of these students suggest that the student teaching messages discussed above (in terms of discipline and control, appearance

versus substance and a whatever works orientation) may have strengthened ideas the students held prior to student teaching, and perhaps prior to beginning the teacher education program in 1988. I asked students, in individual interviews conducted fairly early in their program, to discuss their ideas about teaching and the kind of teacher they hoped to be someday. Their responses focused on teacher characteristics, specific instructional methods, as well as ideas about and techniques for disciplining students.

Data from interviews conducted toward the end of their programs, at the conclusion of student teaching, suggest that the teacher education program's influence may have been minimal. As mentioned above in the section concerning a "whatever works" orientation, the student teachers themselves tended to downplay the role of their teacher education program in terms of impacting their ideas about teaching. Similarly, my interview data show very little change in students' ideas about teaching over the course of the program. Student responses at the end of their programs also focused on teacher characteristics, specific instructional strategies and techniques for disciplining students.

For example, Celia, an elementary education major, said in an early interview that she wanted to be a bubbly, happy teacher with lots of energy who can help young children learn how to share and play together. She also elaborated on positive discipline techniques she hoped to use, involving brief periods of time out in the same room. At the conclusion of student teaching, she made almost identical remarks, stressing her desire to be a "bubbly,

happy, high energy, enthusiastic, positive teacher like Mrs. Drew", a preschool teacher whom she had observed as part of her teacher education program.

Similarly, Justin, a secondary social studies major, said in an interview early in his program that he wanted to be a teacher who is "upbeat", who always opens class with something interesting. He talked about wanting to do some lecturing, but also to use other teaching techniques. At the conclusion of student teaching his comments again focused on teacher characteristics, lecturing and other teaching techniques:

> The way I've always thought it out would be like Monday and Tuesday I would maybe lecture a little,... and Wednesday I would maybe lecture a little more or something and then I'd get into maps. ... And Thursday would be the review and then what questions they had. And every day I'd have time for questions. ... I don't want it to be droning through lecture notes. I want it to kind of be upbeat. ... And then Friday I was thinking [I'd] have a test -- every week.

As the above examples illustrate, the comments about teaching students made at the end of their program were fairly superficial and did not seem to be informed by a great deal of reading and thinking about educational issues. I would expect to get similar responses from individuals who had not received formal instruction about teaching.

Students' previously held ideas about teaching, as expressed

in interviews early in their program, seem to derive largely from their own experiences as students as well as from experiences working with children in church school settings, camps and so on. The programmatic messages sent to them as student teachers were, for the most part, consistent with their prior understandings. The focus on discipline and control, the emphasis on methods and techniques rather than on curricular substance, did not challenge the students' previously held perspectives about teaching. The official college position on critical reasoning was the major programmatic factor that might have served to challenge or significantly modify the students' prior understandings. However, based on observation and interview data from the student teaching semester, this message did not appear to have been received, if it had ever been clearly and strongly transmitted.

STUDENT TEACAHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH CRITICAL REASONING

Whereas the College's official documents stressed the importance of critical reasoning in all programs, the formal and informal programmatic messages these student teachers received stressed the development and use of techniques for behavior management and for the well-organized and attractive delivery of state-mandated curricula. There was little encouragement to examine or reflect on these techniques, except in the sense of questioning the extent to which they work in the classroom. In terms of management techniques, the focus was on whether they worked in the sense of keeping students quiet and obedient; in terms of

instructional techniques, the focus was on whether they looked good and whether they successfully met state curricular and achievement guidelines. In the student teaching portion of the program, as it was experienced everyday by these particular students, both formal and informal programmatic messages were highly inconsistent with critical reasoning as it was discussed in official college documents.

When I asked the student teachers specifically about critical reasoning I discovered that four of them had never heard of it and the other two disagreed with it. Lisa told me, "I really don't even know what it is. I don't really understand. I saw signs about it and wondered what it was all about." Nina and Stephen, on the other hand, did have a sense of what it was about (based on teacher education coursework prior to student teaching) and rejected it. For Nina, this rejection was related to her beliefs about human nature.

> I get so tired of listening to this stuff [about] critical reasoning because that goes against my philosophy altogether. ... I really feel like if you're a human being, you're born with the ability to do critical thinking. I don't think it's necessarily something that can be taught. It's an inborn quality and that's what makes us different [from other animals]. ... So I just don't see it.

She believed that one of her professors was emphasizing the importance of teaching children to think critically, and Nina just

did not believe that thinking is something that can be taught. Stephen's objections to critical reasoning, which were also of a philosophical nature, related directly to his beliefs about Christianity.

> I had problems with that [critical thinking]. ... I think it's good that you teach a child to sort out right from wrong. But then once the child starts thinking, "Well, if I don't think it's right, then it's not right." ... Some things are right and some things are wrong -- period. It's not a question of whether you can justify [it in] your own mind. ... The school system would disagree with me but I would go back to the Bible and God says right from wrong. ... It's not a question of how you feel about it. It's just a question of whether the Bible says it's right or wrong.

THESE STUDENT TEACHERS AS REPRODUCERS OR TRANSFORMERS

As stated earlier, one of my intentions in this chapter is to discuss connections between the experiences of these student teachers in Appalachia and power relations more broadly. One way to address that issue is to look at how the student teaching experiences might be likely to impact the socially reproductive or transformative potential of these prospective teachers.

I have come to believe that the situation is sufficiently complex to make it difficult, if not impossible, to identify such connections with very much certainty. These six individuals are located in a relatively affluent nation where there is widespread

expectation of upward mobility through individual effort and ability. At the same time, they have grown up, and continue to live, in a region which is extremely poor. As described earlier, they know poverty personally, in terms of having uneducated (or undereducated) parents; unemployed (or underemployed), alcoholic fathers; and mothers and grandmothers who worked forty or more hour weeks at minimum wage jobs and then came home to cook, clean and wash clothes for the family. In almost every case, overcoming major obstacles has been necessary in order to complete their college education.

What is the relationship between the nature of the national and regional contexts and the reproductive and transformative potential of these student teachers? It seems to me that the national and local contexts have a conservative impact, encouraging acquiescence rather than resistance in the face of social inequalities. Whereas the students have grown up in communities characterized by glaring power and wealth inequalities, similar to the central Appalachian community studied by Gaventa (1982), they have ~~managed to~~ succeeded ~~in completing~~ successful completed a four year college program. For some, that should enable them to maintain the social class status of their original families and ~~others are in a position to~~ for others it may provide an opportunity to achieve some degree of social mobility. My study of them leads me to believe that it is unlikely that they will challenge the current social system in which they have achieved some moderate success, even though it has been the result of a great deal of struggle. Given their desires to find teaching jobs in an area where there is

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a surplus of teachers, strategic compliance is more likely.

In relation to this, the third dimension of power, as discussed by Gaventa (1982), is significant. In the third dimension of power A controls B by controlling B ideologically, influencing his or her ideas and beliefs. As discussed above, the student teachers were keenly aware of the economic depression characteristic of Appalachia, calling it a third world region, an "economic basket case". They discussed the poverty in Appalachia in general terms as well as in terms of their personal family experiences of being on welfare. However, they stopped short of thinking of the poverty in political terms, in relation to the intensely unequal power relations characteristic of a region so much of which is controlled by wealthy absentee landowners.

What role did this teacher education program play in the nature of their ideas about the current social system? Whereas data from this study do not allow me to answer that question fully, they do offer some ideas worth considering. My experiences with these undergraduate students suggest that their student teaching experiences, and perhaps the teacher education program overall, did little to increase their awareness or understanding of social inequalities and the school's role in maintaining or changing them.

These individuals were completing the final requirement (student teaching) in an undergraduate teacher education program officially organized around the notion of critical reasoning. As discussed earlier, the College's stated primary goal was to "cultivate" thinkers who possess the knowledge and skills necessary

to engage actively in the process of inquiry; thinkers who are aware of diverse perspectives and have the ability as well as the inclination to examine those perspectives carefully with an eye toward making "reasoned value judgments in light of alternatives". While the College's official documents stressed the importance of critical reasoning in all programs, most of the formal and informal programmatic messages these student teachers received were the antithesis of critical reasoning. Instead, they stressed the mechanics of teaching, specifically, the importance of using teaching techniques which are effective in terms of maintaining attractive, well-organized classrooms with quiet, compliant students.

It can be argued that a critical reasoning approach has the potential to encourage students to become more aware of, and responsive to, social inequalitites. For example, Greene (1988) suggests that teachers encourage students to see social conditions as problematic, facilitate classroom dialogue, and take initiatives to discover "humanizing possibilities" in an effort to encourage students to be "awakened" in order to clearly see and name social inequalities, such as those inherent in racism and sexism, which form obstacles in their own lives. According to Greene, this kind of awareness and understanding is necessary for individuals to be willing to resist identified obstacles and work toward envisioned alternatives.

In an earlier phase of the longitudinal study of these students, I examined students' responses to a social foundations

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class in which the instructor focused on social inequalities and the school's responsibility for perpetuating or eliminating those inequalities. I found that students' ideas about the role of education in society **were** impacted, at least temporarily, by their experiences in the course. In interviews conducted at the end of the class, students explained how the course opened their eyes to various perspectives on issues that previously were not considered or were taken for granted. Assigned readings that presented differing perspectives on educational thought and practice, study questions that encouraged critical analysis of these perspectives in relation to particular contexts and beliefs, and class discussions asking students to reflect on and further develop their own value positions were the key elements in this process (Spatig & Bickel, 1993).

The fact that the College of Education had adopted a critical reasoning approach certainly could be seen as a factor increasing the transformative potential of these future teachers. However, the students experienced this approach in only one or two classes, if at all. For the most part, their teacher education program focused on the mechanics of teaching as discussed above in the description of student teaching experiences. This focus strengthened the students' previously held ideas of teaching in terms of personality characteristics and techniques for transmitting information and maintaining classroom control.

Student teachers' previously held ideas about teaching consisted of common-sense, taken-for-granted ideas based on their

experiences as public school students. They did not talk about teaching in terms of social reform or transformation. If Gaventa (1982) and Freire (1972) are right about the potentially conservatizing impact of a context characterized by particularly intense inequalities, this is not surprising. Appalachia continues to be a region of harsh poverty. Recently, a journalist commented that these are the worst times Appalachia has seen in forty years, causing mass migration from the area: "Family upon family is being split apart as one of America's oldest -- and most misunderstood -- cultures is in danger of being wiped away." (Fleishman, 1994)

In this study the student teaching experiences, and to a large extent the entire teacher education program, failed to offer a challenge to these prospective teachers' previous understandings of social inequalities. While this is probably not unlike teacher education in most other U.S. contexts (for example, see Britzman, 1992; Ginsburg, 1988), it has particularly harmful potential consequences in Appalachia. Facilitating an acceptance of the status quo in a region characterized by intense poverty (in relation to a wealth of natural resources owned by a few people and in relation to an affluent national context) and glaring power imbalances, is particularly disturbing. With the exception of the social foundations class, these teacher education students were not encouraged to question, or even be aware of, the political dimensions of Appalachian poverty; as such, the student teaching experiences, as well as most of the teacher education program in general, fostered the socially reproductive, rather than transformative potential of these

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prospective teachers. The teacher education experiences neither encouraged these future teachers to play an active role in social reform efforts (let alone to participate in more radical social movements) nor oriented them to encourage such a response in their own students. This is particularly disheartening in Appalachia where poverty is intense and yet seems to be invisible nationally.

I am not suggesting that the student teaching experiences, or the teacher education program overall, were the major determinants of the orientations of these prospective teachers. As discussed above, these individuals came to the professional training program already holding certain ideas about teaching, ideas which formed the basis for their active responses to teacher education experiences. They left the program with these same ideas. The program experiences, for the most part, did not encourage students to examine their own ideas about teaching critically; nor did it encourage them to consider their role as teachers in terms of reproducing or transforming the social inequities which they have confronted -- and will continue to confront -- in the Appalachian region of the United States.

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